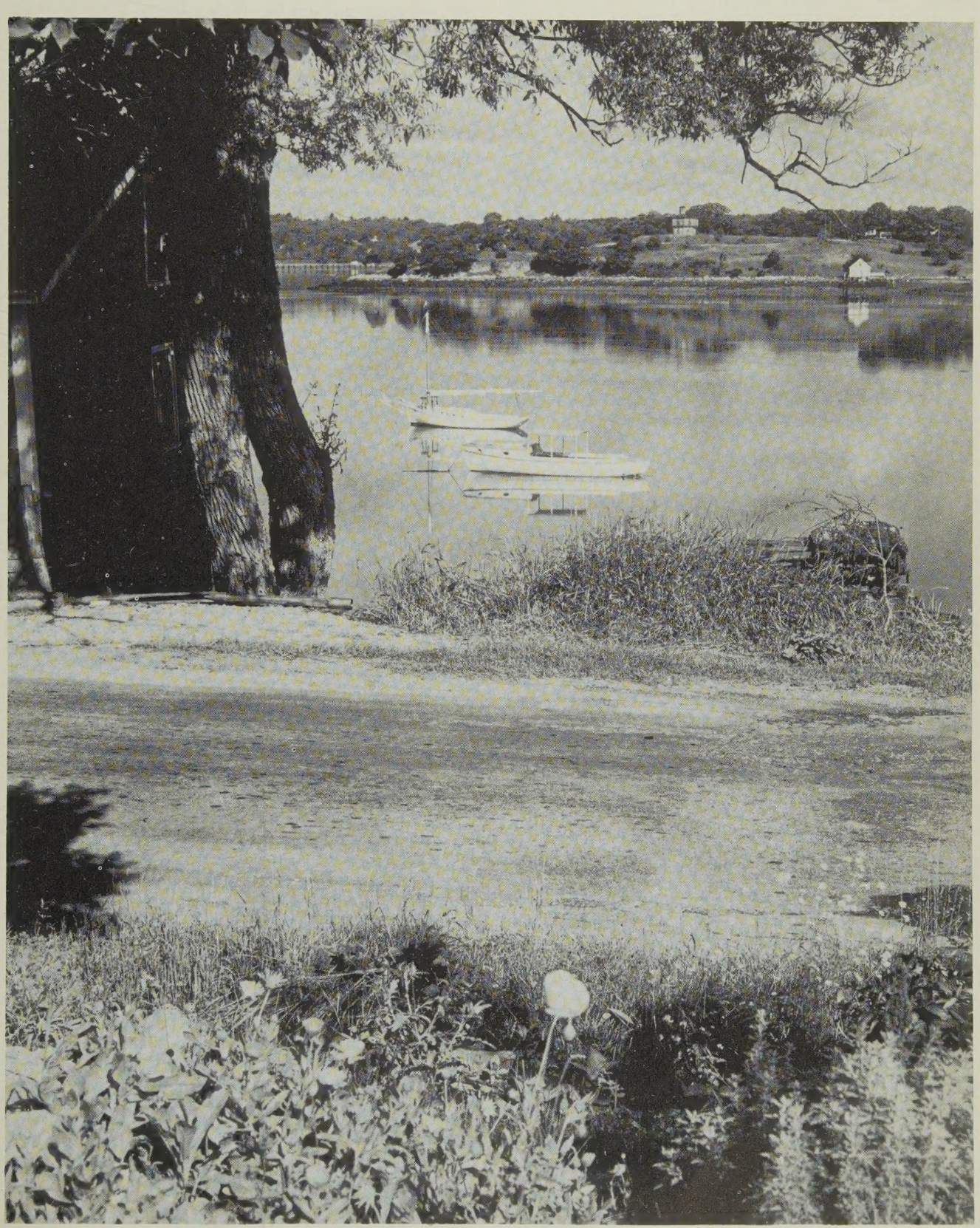
The Congregationalist



July-August, 1958

GLIMPSES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

I. Burton Protests Executive Committee Reports.

One of the few times when a notoriously noisy assembly hall was quiet enough to hear the proverbial pin drop was Tuesday afternoon, June 24, when Rev. Malcolm K. Burton of Pontiac, Michigan, presented a protest against the Report of the Executive Committee of the General Council. This protest was divided into three parts.

Replies Never Reported

The first concerned the omission from the Report of two matters known to Mr. Burton personally. One was the assurance given by the Executive Committee to certain individuals that their participation in the Uniting Snyod of June 1957 would not involve them in membership in the United Church of Christ. The second concerned letters admittedly received from the Continuation Committee and from Judge Henry A. Middleton of Ohio, answers to which gave interpretations of the rights of individuals and churches in accordance with opinions held by the Executive Committee. The contents of these replies have never been reported to the churches, even though record does appear of their having been authorized.

Beyond Constitutional Powers

The second part of the protest has to do with actions of the Executive Committee in going beyond the provisions of the Constitution of the General Council. Nothing in that constitution authorizes the Executive Committee to expend large sums of money for the promotion of some other denomination. "Unless it can be shown," said Mr. Burton, "that the Congregational Christian Churches are in the United Church there is nothing . . . which would authorize expenditure of time, effort and financial substance upon the United Church of Christ by the Executive Committee of this body." He went on to call attention to the fact that neither by the churches themselves, nor by the General Council, nor even by the Uniting General Synod has any action been taken that even claimed to make the Congregational Christian Churches part of the United Church.

Inconsistencies At Cleveland

Thirdly, the protest concerned the inconsistencies in the action of the Uniting General Synod itself. Space does not permit a full report of this, but among other things attention was called to the resolution that the Basis of Union and Interpretations had been "legally adopted," whereas the actual declaration of union proclaimed the Union of the Evangelical and Reformed Church with the *General Council* of the Congregational Christian Churches. This, in Mr. Burton's words, is "a hybrid proposal which had never been discussed in either communion." "While avoiding the direct claim of a union of the two communions," added the speaker, "the General Synod through use of this more obtuse language made a claim suggestive of even more sweeping implications." (Copies of the entire protest may be obtained from Rev. Malcolm K. Burton, 97 Mary Day, Pontiac, Michigan.)

II. Reports on Progress Challenged

On Thursday morning the Minister and Secretary of the General Council gave a report on the progress and development of the United Church since June 1957. Questions from Dr. Henry David Gray of Hartford, Connecticut, brought a clear admission that the Congregational Christian Churches are not a part of the United Church of Christ. With reference to the constitution now in process of preparation, Dr. Ronald Bridges, co-chairman of the Constitutional Commission, was questioned about a statement he was said to have made in a Maine church on June 8, that the constitution was to be for the General Synod only. In his reply Dr. Bridges quoted from the Interpretations of the Basis of Union that it will "define and regulate only as regards the General Synod but describe the free and voluntary relationships which the churches, associations and conferences shall sustain with each other." A direct question as to whether those who reported that he had made the clear statement that it would be "for the General Synod only" had misunderstood him, brought no unequivocal reply. In answer to another question, Dr. Bridges said that just as the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in 1787 went beyond the terms of its original call and prepared a constitution for the United States instead of merely revising the Articles of Confederation, so the Constitutional Commission of the United Church might go beyond the terms of the Basis of Union "if so directed by the Holy Spirit."

III. Annuity Fund and Grant Mortgage Questions.

Resolutions were adopted purporting to give assurance that ministers who do not go into the United Church would not lose their rights in the Annuity Fund, and that churches holding grant mortgages from the Church Building Society would not have to pay those mortgages if they refused to become part of the new denomination.

Midwest Office Opens

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches opened its Midwest Office on June 9, at 176 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin. At such date in the autumn as Rev. Neil H. Swanson, Jr., now pastor of the First Church in Wauwatosa, takes over the duties of Executive Secretary of the Association, this will become the central administrative office.

On June 9 Miss Robbie Lee Redmond became Office Secretary. Miss Redmond has been a high school teacher of commercial subjects for the last four years, and is well qualified for her task. Mr. Swanson, who is now serving as Midwest Regional Secretary of the National Association, reports that she has already accomplished a considerable amount of work. The date when Mr. Swanson will be able to take over full time duties will depend on the filling of his place as pastor at Wauwatosa, and will be announced in a future issue of THE CONGREGATIONALIST.

The cover picture is a view on the Sheepscot River, from North Edgecomb, Maine. The Marie Antoinette House, two doors away, also has a view looking over the river to Old Fort Edgecomb, built in 1808 on Davis Island, just below Wiscasset, Maine.

(Photo courtesy M. J. Bradshaw, Bangor, Maine)

A CONSTITUTION CAN BE AMENDED

The article "Just As Free As We Are (?)" in the June CONGREGATIONALIST (p. 5) tells how a Synod President summarily dismissed an Evangelical and Reformed minister in Parma, Ohio, in spite of the vote of the congregation to keep him. Such incidents as this, and a somewhat similar one at Inkster, Michigan, reveal in a startling way the power of the Synod Presidents, who are ex-officio chairmen of the Placement Committees in that denomination, to overrule the desires of the people of a congregation.

Changes in the Constitution of that Church make it easier now than formerly for these officials to do just this thing. Prior to 1953 such action by the Placement Committee was authorized in somewhat vague terms by the Constitution. "Whenever a change of pastorate seems advisable for the welfare of the congregation or the pastor, or in the interest of the Church at large, the Placement Committee shall effect the change but only after due conference with both parties and with the approval of either or both." Such vagueness sounds disturbing to the kind of Christians who are accustomed to the unqualified power of the local church to keep or dismiss its minister. No definition is found there as to where the authority lay to determine that the change was "advisable."

Vagueness Cleared Up

Amendments to the Constitution have, however, corrected this vagueness, corrected it in the direction of placing the power in the hands of the Synod President. The present wording is, "The Chairman of the Placement Committee, with the concurrence of the Committee and in consultation with the pastor and Committee on Church and Ministry of the congregation *shall determine* if and when it is advisable to effect a pastoral change. Whenever a change of pastor seems advisable for the welfare of the congregation or of the pastor, or in the interest of the Church at large, the Placement Committee *shall effect* the change, but only after due conference with both parties and with the approval of either or both. The change in pastorate shall be effected as rapidly as circumstances and Christian concern make possible." (Italics added.)

The "approval of either or both" may sound at first reading to assure that the final authority rests with the congregation, but the procedures actually followed disprove this. In the Inkster, Michigan, case, so we are told, the Synod President informed the congregation definitely that it did not matter whether they voted approval or not. At Parma, Ohio, the congregation definitely did not approve, but the pastor was told by the Synod President that he must vacate in one week.

Amazing Powers

The powers of the Synod President are amazing to Congregationalists. "He shall confer with the Committee on Church and Ministry in any congregation having unusual problems. He shall meet with any or all of the following as he may deem necessary: pastor, Committee on Church and Ministry, Consistory or Church Council, or entire congregation. *He shall have the power to convene any of the aforementioned bodies, and shall then do whatsoever may be advisable under the circumstances.*"

The italics in the last sentence are of course added, but the addition is obviously justified. Such powers as this: to convene any of the principal boards of the church or the church itself, and then "do whatsoever may be advisable under the circumstances," raise the question, "What bishop could ask for more authority than this?"

These provisions are, to be sure, in the constitution of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and not, so far as we know, in the one being written for the United Church of Christ. But it should be remembered that these extraordinary powers of the Synod President to "exercise creative initiative," as another paragraph in the Constitution calls it, *were not in the document in its original form.* Let churches and ministers which have decided to "wait and see the constitution" ponder! *A constitution can be amended,* and in this case the amending has taken the form of granting astounding power to overhead authority to intervene and overrule in the affairs of a local church.

Congregational Bookshelf

Rev. Royal G. Davis, Los Angeles, California

Books on Christian theory are many; books on its personal practice are fewer. The 14th century gave us *The Imitation of Christ;* the 16th, *Spiritual Exercises.* Today we have *The Single Path,* a persuasive manual of the Christian life by Dr. James W. Fifield, Jr. of First Congregational Church in Los Angeles.

The Single Path (Prentice Hall, $3.95) opens with a description of the creative plunge, man's search for God. Everyday religion is explained as an aid to meaningful marriage, family problems and business affairs. Kindness, prayer and Bible reading are stressed as indispensable religious techniques. A final section applies Christian insight to those widespread fears, growing old, loneliness, despair and failure. "God is by all odds the greatest friend you will ever have."

Dr. Fifield writes with the matchless simplicity laymen appreciate. Out of a distinguished ministry in the world's largest Congregational church, he draws varied examples of the reconciliation Christianity actually provides. This book is not for the theologian in his study. It most assuredly is a welcome addition to the literature table of our sanctuaries.

The author has won national recognition for his vigorous defense of the American Way. We now see him as a great pastor, generous in his sympathies, strong hearted in his faith.

The *Single Path* throws valuable light on the helpful ministry of free Congregationalism in a fast growing metropolis today.

"Compulsion Marks the Death of Fellowship," a playlet in three acts by Harold C. Bailey, is a readable and thoughtful presentation of the merger issue. The playlet takes us to meetings of members of a church where opinion is divided, and the various characters present the arguments on both sides of the issue. Up to twenty copies may be obtained free on request to the League to Uphold Congregationalism, Box 628, Hartford 1, Connecticut.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

What About Missions?

Rev. Harry W. Johnson, Boise, Idaho

In extending the invitation to other Congregational Christian Churches to become members of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, we are not asking our sister churches that they shall in any way disturb or alter their present associations and affiliations. Our invitation is an offer of fellowship for churches which intend, for the future as in the past, to be free Congregational Christian Churches, and which feel the need of such a fellowship with other like-minded churches.

Each church must make its own decisions on such matters as its relationship to its local association, to its conference and to the national denominational agencies. Opinions differ among honest people on these questions, and the right to differ must always be respected in Congregationalism.

The world-wide work of our churches in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ must go on even while we seek for our own churches the ways of maintaining their status as free Congregational Christian Churches.

The plans now being worked out by our Commission on Missions are designed to provide for our churches an avenue of expression of their missionary interests that is clearly free from all possible dangers of misinterpretation.

Churches which believe that they have adequately protected themselves against any dangers in the use of the regular channels of the denomination are, of course, free so to continue. Some churches, however, feel that continued giving through the regular channels may be used against them later as evidence of their having given consent to the merger by their cooperation with these boards. For these churches, some instrument was needed that would channel their missionary gifts to the proper recipients without assuming anything about the intentions of the givers, beyond a commendable interest in Christian missions.

A New Agency

The first steps in this direction were taken by certain members of the Continuation Committee long before the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches had been brought into being. Seven persons agreed to serve as incorporators and trustees of a new corporation, "The Missionary Society of the Congregational Christian Churches." Rev. Howell D. Davies was elected treasurer. Gifts have been received and forwarded to missionary fields through his office.

When the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches began to study the problems involved in the formation of its own policies as to missionary giving, the trustees of The Congregational Christian Missionary Society offered the services of their organization. Further, they offered to cooperate in any way possible in working out a plan that would avoid all competitive or overlapping functions.

Such a plan is in the making. The two groups are being fully integrated, and our churches wishing to channel their missionary gifts through the National Association are invited to address such gifts to Dr. Howell D. Davies, Room 2308, 100 North La Salle Street, Chicago 2, Illinois, who will serve as treasurer for the Commission on Missions of the National Association as it serves those who seek its services in this matter.

Our interest in missions should not be allowed to lag because of our absorption with internal problems. Free churches, with their glorious good news of a gospel of freedom in Christ, should continue to give resounding witness to their faith.

Our Devotional Column

Prescription For Failure

Rev. Philip J. Cleveland, Canterbury, Connecticut

"Cast the net on the right side and ye shall find."
John 21:6.

Life seemed to have failed a group of stalwart fishermen; their Master had apparently failed, crucified on Calvary. They have gone back to the sea and now the waves fail them. With empty nets and arms they are coming ashore after a luckless night. The Master has come close in the early morning mist and he speaks to them.

"Cast the net . . ." Why, the disciples have been casting that net all night long! Cast it once more? Yes, and in the very same sea, in the region of failures and mockery. They are to begin again right where they are.

"Jesus stood on the shore . . . Jesus saith unto them." It was the bright, blessed Intruder who turned the night of despair into the magic dawn! The Master does make the difference, and we may all know the miracle of his continuing Presence.

How He gets to us we do not know, but He arrives when we face hours of weakness, uselessness, despair! He interrupts our marches of despondency and challenges us to begin again. That is always His word; and in His presence we receive the faith and courage to begin again.

Robert W. Service wrote the simple lines:

> Yes, if you're a tramp in tatters,
> While the blue sky bends above
> You've got all that matters —
> You've got God, and God is love.

And the Eternal has a wonderful way of appearing to us in the Presence of the Man of Nazareth and by his words inspiring us and renewing our will to go forward. In such sublime moments of high endeavor we always create new achievements and accomplish real triumphs.

Have we counted the Master in? Have we paid heed to His timeless challenges? Our nation needs to go forward at this sad, crucial time in His strength and power. Our churches need to gird themselves and place strong, new hands on the oars — even according to His word. We, ourselves, need to wait for His sublime message and begin our labors once more.

"Cast the net again." Cast it in the name of the great Christ right here and now, in 1958, and watch what the Master will do as you trust and obey him!

PRAYER: Blessed and Eternal Father, grant to us new strength and courage for the dark, misty mornings of our days. Break through with the light of heaven, resident in Thy beloved Son; let us hear Him and heed His word and go at our tasks again, strengthened by His Spirit, inspired by His challenges, illumined by His great achievements. Amen.

From the Executive Secretary (*Cont.*)

WOMEN'S WORK

In the May letter to the presidents of women's organizations of our member churches, a questionnaire and an invitation for suggestions were enclosed. The replies have indicated areas of special need and will be used as a guide in planning the panel discussion and "buzz sessions" of our Seminar at the Annual Meeting in Detroit, October 21-23.

Many requests have come for material on missions to be used in the circles as a basis for study and discussion. Of course, you will want to know something about the various mission projects which the National Association, through its Commission on Missions, recommends to the churches and invites churches to support. You especially will want to know the details about the Women's Project, the one benevolence which we women share in common, as recommended by the Women's Seminar at the last Annual Meeting.

The Thrilling Story

The most thrilling story to be found in American church history on the subject of missions has been written by Congregationalists. The belief in their mission as Christians, and the zeal with which they pursued their goals have made the record of Congregational missionary achievements an enviable one.

Meet men like John Eliot, Thomas Mayhew, Thomas Hooker, Washington Gladden, Henry Ward Beecher, John Brown, Manassah Cutler, and a host of others. Much has been written about our heroes, much less has been written about our heroines, but if you persevere, you will find them also. You might even become an armchair missionary and share your discoveries about them with all of us.

Venture Into Study

We hope that all of you share in the conviction that we ought to have more knowledge about our own great leaders. We hope you will have the Congregational missionary zeal and courage born of conviction to make their contributions to the achievements of earlier years better known to all of us.

We invite all our women's organizations to venture into a study of Congregational missions in America during the coming year. The first stop on our journey could be for a visit with John Eliot, who came to America in 1632, the first missionary to the American Indians. His work was augmented by that of Thomas Mayhew and his son, and by 1674 there were 40,000 "praying Indians," a population percentage which any present day evangelist would envy.

Your passport for this journey is your interest in learning about your Congregational heritage. A card to your local library will serve as your ticket. The journey will last as long as you keep learning. You can start to get ready any time, any day.

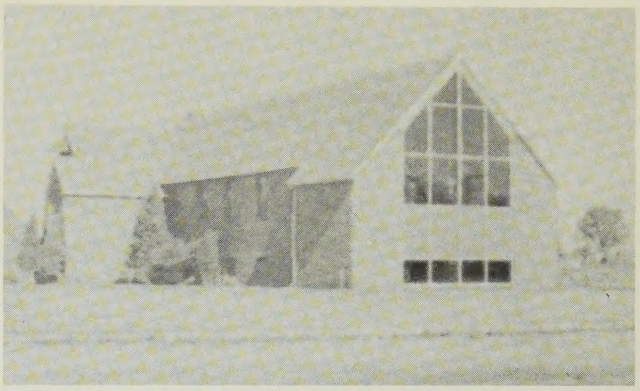
A glimpse of some source material follows. Use your library card for others and don't forget your notebook!

APOSTLE TO THE INDIANS

(Review of an article by Francis Russell in *The American Heritage,* December 1957.)

John Eliot, "who may have been the first New England minister to take orders in the Congregational manner," was born in England in 1604. He was part of that golden age in England which experienced a great ambition to create, to explore, to seek religious freedom, and in this case to Christianize the world. Educated in England, he followed Thomas Hooker, with whom he had been associated in an English school, to America.

Mayfair Marches Ahead



The Mayfair Congregational Church, Toledo, Ohio, Rev. Angus MacDonald, pastor, has completed a remodelling of its church. The seating capacity is more than doubled and the basement area for the Sunday School almost tripled. The eastern end of the church is a curtain wall with a stainless steel cross in the center. The glass is a new grey, glare resistant glass which is relieved by a steel panel with a green porcelain enamel on the outside. This type of structure is relatively new and has been examined by other architects because of possible further use. The congregation has just started meeting in the new sanctuary and is enthusiastic over the change that has been made. Mayfair Church is in a growing area on the outskirts of Toledo and this addition will be a great help in meeting the needs of the growing neighborhood.

Women's Work (*Cont.*)

Taking very seriously that part of the Massachusetts charter which "declared its intention to wynn the natives of the country to the knowledge and obedience of the onlie true God and Saviour of mankind," and because he felt it in his heart "that the Indians were human beings created by God, and souls to be saved," John Eliot devoted a large part of his over fifty years' ministry with and for Algonquin Indian tribes in the Boston area.

The "Praying Indians"

He learned their language; he preached to them; he took them gifts of clothing, blankets, spades, axes, tools; and he trained some as teachers and preachers. He helped them to establish fourteen villages, and they became known as "Praying Indians" to the colonists, who for the most part looked sourly on the work of Eliot. However, the "Praying Indians' Villages" were proudly shown off to the "visiting clergymen from Boston," who were deeply impressed that the Indians could give the right answers when catechized. The "ferocious creed" of Calvin probably could mean little to the Indians, but the fearless character of Eliot, whose "warm and loving heart" shone through, did mean much. Unfortunately, much of the good work done by Eliot was undone by King Philip's War, but even so, a remnant of some 400 survived and remained loyal to Eliot.

The crowning achievement of Eliot's life was his translation of the Bible into the Indian language. *Up Biblum* was the first Bible printed in America. John Eliot worked on the translation for ten years with the aid of two Algonquin Indians who could speak English. All this time Eliot was minister of the Roxbury church and still found time to establish the Roxbury Latin School.

LAYMEN CAN – AND DO – EXPRESS THEMSELVES

Mrs. Chester B. Scoville, Torrington, Connecticut

Many lay members of our churches have been reluctant to express themselves on the merger issue, especially when their minister is in favor of the union. One layman has said, "If I need a new building in my business, I consult an engineer. If I have a legal problem I consult a lawyer. If it is a matter of what the church ought to do, I consult the minister."

But when laymen have their doubts about the desirability of something the minister favors, they have not only the right but the duty of consulting together about it and taking action according to the judgment at which they collectively arrive. Here is the way it was done in Center Church, Torrington, Connecticut.

The first step was to gather five or more members of the church who believe in the Congregational Way. We did this in the fall of 1957. At the first meeting the group elected a chairman, reviewed carefully the present situation in our churches, and considered what could be done for the Congregational cause, both in the local church and in association with other Congregationalists.

Publicity and Action

This Council of Concern acted to do these things:

1. Reported its formation in the church bulletin and invited all members who shared its concern to join the Council, and informed neighboring Congregational churches of our action.

2. Distributed copies of "The Congregationalist" (then called "The Free Churches"), "What It Means To Be A Member of a Congregational Christian Church," and other literature.

3. The Council members invited others to attend the organization meeting of the Connecticut Congregational Fellowship held April 17, 1958, at Hartford.

4. Reports of significant events (as reported in "The Congregationalist," in correspondence, and in meetings like that of April 17) will be released to the local press.

5. Membership in the Connecticut Congregational Fellowship is being established by certification of the Church Clerk as provided in the Constitution and By-Laws of the Fellowship. (A "Council of Concern" or "Committee to Keep Our Church Congregational," formed by five or more members who have had their church membership certified, and which records its action with the Secretary of the Connecticut Congregational Fellowship, thereby becomes an Associate Member of the state Fellowship.)

6. Financial support of boards and agencies which have become a part of the "The United Church" is discussed in a letter addressed to the Board of Trustees and the Prudential Committee, calling for all monies to be channelled through the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches from now on.

Church Votes Re-Affirmed

The Council of Concern sponsored a resolution which was voted by the Trustees, reaffirming the position previously taken by the church and informing the State Conference and Boards that participation in conference or board activities (sending delegates, making contributions, etc.) "is not . . . to . . . be deemed . . . as actual or implied membership in the United Church of Christ."

"Go and Do Thou Likewise."

You can form a council in your church. Organize, study, act: these are the essentials. A Congregational Church is governed by its *members*. You may be the ones to save our free Congregational Way in your church, and help to save it in our country.

New Hampshire Congregationalists Confer

The Annual Meeting of the New Hampshire League to Preserve Congregationalism was held in the Y. W. C. A. at Manchester on April 26. After a devotional service led by Rev. Donald B. Howard of Claremont, the Executive Secretary, Mrs. Arthur J. Benoit of Dunbarton, gave her report stating among other things that the number of names on the League's list of interested persons had grown in a year from 240 to 500.

Harold C. Bailey of Hartford, Conn., Executive Secretary of the League to Uphold Congregational Principles, spoke on "A Broader View of Christian Unity," pointing out that the Congregational principle of acknowledging all earnest Christians as valid Christians is the true way to ecumenicity. Other addresses were given by Rev. Joseph J. Russell, Eastern Field Representative of the National Association, and Dr. Arthur A. Rouner of Cadman Memorial Church, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Officers for the next year were elected: Acting Chairman, Norman S. McKendrick of Exeter; Vice Chairman, Rev. Albert G. Cornwell of Derry; Executive Secretary, Mrs. Arthur J. Benoit of Dunbarton; Recording Secretary, Mrs. L. D. Peterkin of Hancock; Treasurer, Henry C. Burrows of Exeter; with an Executive Board consisting of C. Stuart Bradley of Hancock, Rev. Donald B. Howard of Claremont, Carleton W. Morse of Charlestown, Mrs. Daniel Norton, Manchester, and Douglas Robertson of Plymouth.

Maine Council Incorporates

William S. Cole, Esquire, Newport, Maine

The Congregational Christian Council of Maine was incorporated with the Secretary of State at Augusta on June 9, 1958, as a result of the meeting held May 22 at Newport, at which the organization started on April 10 was completed and a Statement of Purpose and By-Laws adopted. The stated purposes are, (1) to provide a Maine fellowship for Congregational Christian churches and their ministers, (2) to safeguard the free Congregationalism of Maine and keep the local churches entirely independent, and to protect the vested and dedicated rights, properties, trust funds and obligations of Congregationalism in Maine; (3) to advise and counsel churches when requested, but under no circumstances to exercise authority over churches or serve as an ecclesiastical court, and (4) to do any and all things that a free religious corporation without capital stock can do under the laws of Maine.

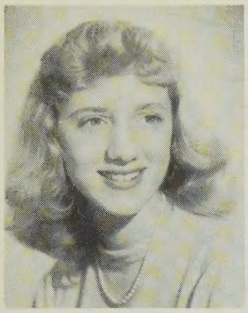
The purpose of protecting the vested and dedicated rights, properties, trust funds and obligations indicates the determination of Pine Tree State Congregationalists to take any legal action which may become necessary to prevent the present state organizations of Congregationalism from carrying into a new denomination the assets rightfully belonging to the free churches.

This organized action is guided by outstanding and inspiring Congregational leadership. Its fellowship warms the hearts of those who hunger for such demonstrations, and the unfolding plans in Maine hold great promise.

Accent On Youth

Miss Jerni Ann Jarnagan

(Given as "Young Adult Witness" at First Congregational Church, Los Angeles, California)



An opportunity such as this, for a young person to speak with virtual freedom before one of the largest congregations in this country, does not, I am certain, commonly abound. As I try to tell you something of the appreciation I deeply feel for my religion and for this Church in particular, let my very presence here proclaim the reality of it all. For faith *works*, it is not merely written in books. Faith works in tangible ways, in warm, human ways of love.

What I am especially grateful to God for is that He made us free moral agents, free to follow the paths we want in life. Of course this does not result in an automatically well-ordered society — a bee colony — but it is this very allowance for the possibility of error which *makes* the relationship between God and man. I mean this thought to be received by you not as an abstract notion, but as something very personal. *Of choice* I have worshipped God — and my greatest joy has come when I have spent much time in contemplation and prayer. *Of choice*, although not apparently as deliberate a choice, I have also neglected to give thanks to God for his great love and for all the evidences of it — and have been proportionately less happy. This last choice can be easily rationalized — as "Oh, I've been too busy," or "I'm a pretty good person; I think I'll ease up a little." But few of us can successfully kid ourselves. I know I can't. The wonderful thing, as I comprehend it, about the individual's freedom in relation to God is that however frequently he may falter, God's forgiveness is always ready to be given in fullest measure if the individual will but humble himself and with a contrite spirit beg forgiveness.

And I am grateful to man, that he has felt the compulsion to share his faith in God by helping others in psychological and religious therapy, and in the erection of churches, for example.

Debt to the Church

Specifically, the free Congregational Church has deeply ingrained itself on my heart. I love it as my Christian home, for it has respected my individuality — it has said I am accountable to God alone — it has inspired me with the sermons of its outstanding minister, it has given me the benefits and duties of Choir membership, it has given me friends, wonderful friends, and it has given me the opportunity to participate in the young adult groups. It is in this latter area, that so much potentiality exists, which if made fully manifest could well help to put the Church into the position of being a vital, throbbing organ in the life of the community.

My religious life before being introduced to First Church via Radio Evensong could hardly have been called systematic; it has been only since aligning myself formally with the Church that I can more fully appreciate the statement that one can be a Christian outside the Church, but how much straighter the path inside the Church and how much richer the blessings!

PASTORAL RELATIONS

Rev. J. Edwin Elder, Boise, Idaho

It was recognized from the beginning that if the National Association was to serve adequately the member churches, and all others that wanted to remain free from ecclesiastical domination, some way must be found to aid them in the period between pastorates. Contacts must be made both with churches seeking pastors, and ministers seeking churches. This would be a service rendered to both churches and ministers, the National Association office serving as a depository of information, a channel of communication, and a source of suggestions.

A real effort has been made to establish such a service in the national office. The present writer has been working as associate with the Executive Secretary, Dr. Harry W. Johnson, for more than a year in this field. Even before that, Dr. Johnson had been giving some time to organizing this service. So, from the beginning of the national office in Boise, Idaho, this help has been offered to ministers and churches.

Our set-up is not yet complete and our service not adequate. But we have communicated with many ministers and churches. We try to enter into their problems with understanding. We offer information and suggestions. We seek fuller information about the needs and desires of both churches and ministers that we may be better able to help. We seek, not to have our suggestions followed, but to bring the right ministers and churches together.

Information, Please

But if this service is to continue and grow, we need to add to the present list of ministers and churches seeking help through this office. Also we need full information about those who seek our aid. If ministers desiring to re-locate, or expecting to ask for help at a future date, will write us, we can supply them with an informational sheet. When a minister fills this out, it gives us a rather clear picture of the man, his past experience, his present activities, and his future desires. This, with references and some pictures, gives us a good fund of information when approaching a church and suggesting names.

Likewise, if churches seeking our help will give us definite information about buildings, membership, salary, and what type of minister they seek, we would be in a better position to aid them.

We do not always succeed in suggesting the right solution to these pastoral problems. Far from it. But we are trying, and with no other motive than to be of help. However, we do need names and information to improve our help.

We are cooperating in this pastoral relations field with Rev. J. J. Russell of 61 East Street, Melrose 76, Massachusetts, the Eastern Representative of the National Association. Churches and ministers in the Northeast should communicate with him as well as with the national office in Boise, Idaho.

SEND IN YOUR GIFT NOW

Personal gifts to the National Association serve a double purpose if made during the summer months. The primary support for the National Association comes, of course, from its member churches. During the summer months, however, contributions from these go down while the churches themselves are least active. Please send in your personal gift now, while your church's help is less regular. Mr. Paul R. Biggs, Barclay Building, Oregon City, Oregon, is Treasurer.

Volume 1 THE CONGREGATIONALIST Number 6

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." — Galatians 5:1

COMMISSION ON MISSIONS

Nine members of the Commission on Missions and Church Extension of the National Association, together with three visitors, met at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, on May 27 to consider recommendations for missionary projects which our free churches may well support.

Dr. Howell D. Davies, who had recently returned from a visit to Alaska, reported on his visit to the mission at Metlakatla, and also spoke of the need for a free Congregational church in the fast-growing Alaskan city of Anchorage.

Chairman Max Strang, who had recently visited Piedmont College, Demorest, Georgia, told of the needs of that college, which is doing a great work under many difficulties. Women's groups and Sunday Schools in our churches may well help the library, which needs $50.00 a year for books for each of the nine departments. Donations of clothing for re-sale in the college thrift shop are very helpful to this college, which has about three hundred students, many of whom come in daily by bus from the surrounding country. Opportunities are excellent for a work-service camp in 1959.

Progress in the new Church of our Saviour, Pacoima, California, was reported, and it was voted to recommend to the Missionary Society that aid be given. Announcement has since been received that the Church of the Messiah in Los Angeles has made a generous pledge toward land purchase or other capital investment for this promising church.

Our Overseas Work

Rev. and Mrs. Olli Jokisaari, who have since left for India, met with the Commission regarding their prospective work in the Darjeeling district in North India. From 1950-1957 Mr. Jokisaari was district agent for Church World Service, and will carry on evangelistic and relief work. Mrs. Jokisaari is a nurse. Following this interview it was voted to recommend that $1200 be appropriated toward their work. It is hoped that while in India Mr. Jokisaari may go to Nagercoil, South India, to confer with Rev. A. Zachariah of the Travancore Church Council.

After discussion of the Hong Kong and Formosa refugee work, reported in the June "Congregationalist," it was voted to recommend that $50.00 a month be appropriated in aid to this work.

Opportunities At Home Also

Rev. John D. Rose of Birmingham, Michigan, told of the excellent opportunities for new free Congregational churches in the Detroit area. Considerable sums toward this have been voted by the churches in Lathrup Village and Royal Oak. The chairman stated, "We receive with joy the word from the Detroit area churches that they envision new churches there." Support was voted for the work at Mayfair Church, Toledo, Ohio.

The meeting of the Directors of the Missionary Society which followed the Commission meeting, voted to adopt the recommendations of the Commission, and the Treasurer was authorized to remit accordingly. Free churches are joining wholeheartedly in the support of this Commission in furthering the Kingdom of God in the Congregational way.

Another "Mayflower"

New Church in Grand Rapids

Another "Mayflower" was launched on May 15 at Grand Rapids, Michigan, when a devoted group of Congregationalists met and agreed to form the Mayflower Congregational Church of Grand Rapids. This new church was organized because the group felt that there is need in that city for a Congregational church dedicated to basic Congregational principles. Many people had concluded, after much prayerful consideration, that the feeling of "togetherness" had been lost in the church where they had been worshipping and working.

At a second meeting with about three hundred in attendance, further progress was made. A four acre site has been obtained, an architect appointed, and preliminary building plans are under way. Services and Sunday School are to begin on September 7th.

The first corporate meeting was held on June 4, and at that time a unanimous call was extended to Rev. Bruce H. Masselink, for the last 19 years pastor of the First Congregational Church of Burlington, Iowa. Mr. Masselink is well known among the members of the new church, for he served from 1936 to 1939 as assistant minister to Dr. Edward A. Thompson, who was then pastor of Park Congregational Church, Grand Rapids. He will begin his new duties on September 1, 1958. Mr. Masselink is a member of the Executive Committee of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, and served as Chaplain of the 1957 Annual Meeting at Hartford.

Commission on Missions (*Cont.*)

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